The Tragedy of Fadak

a play about Fadak

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The Tragedy of Fadak

Please recite a Fātiḥah for the marḥūmīn of all those involved in this project.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0Eph_q-1v8

(Video to be played at the beginning of the play and between scenes, to be explained)

Narrator:

How many of you have heard the term Fadak before? Do you know what Fadak is?

Yes you're right! Fadak was a piece of land that our noble Prophet (ṣ) gifted to his beloved daughter, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa).

Now can you guess what happened to this gift he gave her? Did she get to keep it? Did she ever benefit from this land? Unfortunately, no. The sad history of Fadak is that the men who wrongfully came into power after the Prophet took away the land from Sayyidah Fāṭimah, claiming it was their right. They told her she wasn't allowed to inherit gifts like this from the Prophet. Now, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) knew that it was her right to keep it, and she knew the Prophet would never give her this gift if Allah did not want him to do so. She also knew that if no one protested against these men, then they would continue to change the message of the Prophet. Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) had to make the difficult decision to go to the masjid and speak to the people herself. You see, she upheld the highest levels of ḥayāʾ and therefore, she would not be seen in public, let alone speak in front of men. However, given the circumstances, she knew it was her responsibility to fight for the ḥaqq, or truth, and defend wilāyah.

To learn more about what happened when Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) went to the masjid that day, and how the Muslims reacted, we have a play for you today. In the play, our actors will discuss what Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) said in the masjid to defend her right to keep the land of Fadak, and how the Muslims knew she was right, but they didn't know how to react. Most of the characters are fictitious, but the story is based on historical events. Similarly, the words of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) are based on her actual sermon of Fadak. Listen carefully to the story and see if you can ponder upon the lessons that we can implement in our own lives.

Join us now as Raḥīm prepares tea for his friends Saʿd and Ḥamīd, who are coming over to his place.

Scene 1

Props: Qahwah cups, bread loaf, bowl of olives, olden tea pot

Raḥīm and Wahab are preparing tea while they wait for their friends.

Raḥīm: Saʿd and Ḥamīd should be here any moment, Wahab, is the tea ready?

Wahab: Yes, Raḥīm, the tea is ready; I'm just cutting the bread to have with the tea.

Raḥīm: Barley bread?! Hamid is visiting after long—let's not give him barley bread! Put out some dates instead—the fresh ones from the bazaar—and some grapes as well.

Wahab: Are you sure? What's the special occasion?

RaḥIm: No occasion, it's just been a long time since they came over, and there's so much to discuss! We need something to help us through these hard times.

You know, I sometimes still can't believe Rasūlullāh has left us. I miss him. You know, when I found out he was not well, I was extremely worried about who would be our leader.

Wahab: Yes, but now Abū Bakr is the leader of the Muslims, and he seems to be doing a good job.

RaḥIm: Yes, but you remember the event of GhadIr, when Rasūlullāh said ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib would be the leader after him, don't you?

Wahab: Yes, but...the Muslims got together and chose Abū Bakr didn't they?

RaḥIm: True, but not *all* the Muslims. I wasn't there when they chose him.

Wahab: Hmm, come to think of it, I wasn't there either. But as long caliph Abū Bakr is looking after the Islamic cities well and we are safe, what is the problem?

RaḥIm: That's true; we have food, water, work, and our families are okay, too. It doesn't really matter who our leader is, as long as we are okay. Plus, we have the Qurʾān—that's enough...right?

Wahab: Yes, you're right, we have the Qurʾān, but didn't Prophet say at GhadIr that the Qurʾān and Ahl al-Bayt should never be separated? I mean, I understand most of the Qurʾān, but it does need explanation. The Prophet (ṣ) said that only his successors truly understand the Qurʾān. Anyhow, I do wish all this violence hadn't occurred right after the death of the Prophet. Everyone knows how much he loved his daughter, and yet some of the Muslims attacked her house so soon after his death. It's so confusing whom to believe. I heard that they burnt her door and she lost her unborn baby—just so that ʿAlī would give bayʿah to Abū Bakr. I can't believe they would do such an ugly thing.

RaḥIm: Yes, I was shocked when I heard that, too. That's no way to treat the Prophet's daughter!

Wahab: Maybe Saʿd and Ḥamīd will have more information for us. Where are they, anyways?

RaḥIm: I've been hearing noises all afternoon—maybe something happened in the center of Medina and that's why they have taken so long.

(Saʿd and Ḥamīd burst onto stage with a bowl of olives, removing their shawls)

Wahab: What took you so long? Did you go to buy olives or *make* olives?

Saʿd: My friend, You have no idea what just happened in Masjid an-NabawIī! Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), the daughter of Rasūlullāh, came to the masjid and gave a sermon!

Wahab: Really? That's impossible! I've never heard of her doing such a thing! And I heard she's not well!

Ḥamīd: Yes, she came in great pain...it was heartbreaking to see her so sorrowful. Let me tell you what happened.

(Curtains Close)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

Play video 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CynS9XXRic

Narrator: In Scene 2, Ḥamīd explains to his friends what happened in the masjid. It is as if we are seeing the khuṭbah live.

Props: Abū Bakr's chair and wooden block

Ḥamīd ***(As he speaks Sayyidah Fāṭimah enters the stage):***

When Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) heard that Abū Bakr had taken Fadak, she came to the masjid wearing a long dress, encircled by women of the Banī Hāshim, as an added layer of ḥijāb. We couldn't really even see her. We had just completed the Jumuʿah prayer when she entered the masjid in a way that everyone there was reminded of her father, the Prophet. The people were startled, and everyone started whispering. She sat behind a curtain and sighed so painfully that all of us inside the masjid started weeping. She was quiet for a little while, and then she started speaking.

(Sayyidah Fāṭimah acting like she is talking, and people are reacting silently)

She praised Allah, spoke about the special prophethood of Rasūlullāh, and praised Imām ʿAlī's efforts for Islam. She then asked the Muslims how they could stray so far from the wishes of the Prophet. She said:

Sayyidah Fāṭimah: O Muslims! What is wrong with you? Instead of answering the call of Allah, you are answering the call of Shayṭān. You are destroying the practices of your Prophet, and opposing his family in public and in secret. You are destroying the practices of the chosen Prophet and opposing the Ahl al-Bayt in secret and in open.

And now you're saying that we cannot inherit from the Prophet! O Muslims! Are you comfortable with robbing me of my rights? Have you failed to read the Qurʾān? In the Qurʾān, Allah says that a person can inherit from his or her father. Can't I inherit from my father? Allah also says "And (Prophet) Sulaymān inherited from Dāwūd." Doesn't this verse also apply to my father?

Do you think you understand the verses of the Qurʾān better than my father Rasūlullah and his brother, cousin, and successor, ʿAlī?! Then, take Fadak until we meet on the Day of Judgement, where Allah will be the Best Judge!

She turns away

(Curtains Close)

Ḥamīd (talking from off stage): When she completed her speech, everyone was in shock and crying uncontrollably. Abū Bakr was about to give the deed of Fadak back to her, when ʿUmar approached him. He convinced him not to give Fadak away by saying, "Where will you get the money for the Muslims if the Arabs decide to fight you?" At this, Abū Bakr reflected for a moment. He seemed to be deciding what to do. He knew Fadak was a gold mine, which is why it was fought for over hundreds of years. Its land was fertile, and it could fund most of the government. Realizing this, he lost the battle to his guilty conscience, and after some time, he tore up the deed.

End of Scene 2

Play video 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmxPBalfRNI

Scene 3

Props from Scene 1: teapot, bread, olives

Narrator: After Ḥamīd narrated the khuṭbah and told his friends what happened, they sat to discuss the situation.

Wahab: He tore up the deed?! How could he do that?!

Saʿd: Yes, that's what he did! I was shocked when I saw him do it!

Raḥīm: Now I'm even more confused! What should we think about all this?!

Saʿd: Maybe the caliph has the best interest of the Muslims at heart because, after all, Fadak is extremely valuable.

Ḥamīd: Not only that. Did you know that there is an army of 40,000 men stationed outside of Medina, waiting to attack this city? The caliph needs this money; otherwise, we'll all be finished *(puts hand on throat).*

Wahab: Remember, at Badr, when we were only 313 vs 1,000? It was our faith and Allah's power that helped us defeat the polytheists. Besides, Fadak may be valuable, but not valuable enough to take care of the entire government's problems.

Raḥīm: Yeah, and you can't just steal something from someone to help others. The end doesn't justify the means.

Saʿd: But I think the Muslims won it after a war with the Jews. So, Fadak actually belongs to all of us Muslims; it is Bayt ul-Māl. I am sure that is why Abū Bakr took it.

RaḥĪm: You must eat almonds to increase your memory, yā Akhī! You clearly don't remember. Fadak was not won by the Muslims. The Jews of Fadak *gifted* the land to the Prophet (ṣ); it had nothing to do with the government. So, Fadak belonged to the Prophet, who then gifted it to his daughter, upon the command of Allah.

Saʿd: Yā Allah! So it really does belong to Sayyidah Fāṭimah!

RaḥĪm: Yup. Don't you remember how poor people would go to her, and she would divide the produce of Fadak between them? Only the family of the Prophet (ṣ) is so generous!

Wahab: So what do we do now? What was Abū Bakr's reason for taking Fadak?

ḤamĪd: He believes Fadak is a property of the Muslims, and the Prophet gave it away in the way of Allah. Now that Rasūlullāh (ṣ) has passed away, Abū Bakr is in charge of it.

Saʿd: Well, that is obviously not true! We just proved it belongs to Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)!

ḤamĪd: But he also quoted a line he said he heard from Rasūlullāh: "We Prophets don't leave any inheritance—not gold, not silver, no land, no house."

RaḥĪm: Yā Allah! I swear I've never heard this ḥadīth before! Tell me, Saʿd, how did she reply to the ḥadīth about the Prophets not leaving inheritance?

Saʿd: She answered with verses of the Qurʾān. She quoted the verse of Prophet Sulaymān inheriting from Prophet Dāwūd. And a verse that says we inherit from our fathers. She asked us if the family of the Prophet was excluded from these verses.

Wahab: Such intelligent arguments are impossible for the caliph to refute! After all, the Prophet had said that if any ḥadīth contradicts the Qurʾān, we should disregard that ḥadīth. It is clear from Sayyidah's eloquent reply that this is not an authentic ḥadīth.

Saʿd: This visit has turned into a political discussion! Look at the sky—it's almost evening! I must head home now...it is late. I still have to pass by the market to get some dates for my family.

ḤamĪd: I need to buy some camel milk, too. Let us leave.

Saʿd: Maʿ as-salām, Raḥīm. Aḥsant for the chai!

(Curtains Close)

End of Scene 3

Play video 4: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn-3FpIERqw&t=125s

Scene 4: In the Market

Props: Packed dates, bottles to show milk, two baskets full of potatoes and cucumbers

Narrator: Raḥīm stays behind in his house while Saʿd, Ḥamīd, and Wahab head home while passing by the market. They find people are discussing what happened earlier in the masjid.

Enter sellers and two customers buying things in silence. One customer buys something and exits while one remains.

Date seller (Suhayl): At-tamr! At-tamr! Buy Ajwā dates!

Milk seller (Marwān) to Customer 1: Here, take your camel milk, and here is your change.

Customer 1: Thank you, jazākallāh, for the change. By the way, did you hear the sermon of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) today?

Milk seller: Yes! Subḥānallāh! She reminded us of our duty to the Qurʾān and the laws of Islam!

Customer 1: You know, I was shocked after she spoke. I didn't know Fadak belonged to Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa)! From her eloquent speech, it is clear that Fadak belongs to her. She made strong arguments with irrefutable evidence. This is oppression toward her! Woe to us! We are to blame. We are the ones who remained silent.

Milk seller: Shh...speak softly! Someone might hear us talking about politics.

Customer 1: Sorry...I guess it is what it is. Anyhow, thank you for the milk. Maʿas-salām. (Exits scene)

(Continue talking silently as Saʿd, Wahab and Ḥamīd enter. Ḥamīd goes to the date seller and the other two to milk seller)

Ḥamīd to date seller: Salāmun ʿalaykum, my dear friend Suhayl. How are you? How is business?

Date seller (Suhayl): Waʿalaykum salām. It is okay at the moment. And how are you doing?

Ḥamīd: I'm well, alḥamdulillāh. May I have a kilo of dates please?

Date seller: Yes, here you go. I saw you at the masjid today during Sayyidah Fāṭimah's sermon. I looked for you again, but you had already left.

Ḥamīd: Yes, I had to leave to go to Raḥīm's house. But what a sermon it was! Everyone was crying! But you know what? It's strange that all we did was cry, yet no one said anything to support or help her. Why were we quiet? Why are we letting this happen to the family of Rasūlullāh (ṣ)?

Date seller: You know, to tell you the truth, my friend here and I are really confused. We are confused about this, aren't we Marwān?

Milk seller: What are you saying Suhayl? You know I have a hearing problem and can't hear well.

Date seller: Taʿāl, Marwān. Come here.

(Milk seller and all the three men gather front stage to discuss the situation)

Date seller: I am saying, Marwān, that we were confused after the sermon of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa).

Milk seller: Yes, truly, we are confused. She is so truthful, and the sermon made so much sense, but on the opposite side, we have Abū Bakr, who is our caliph, who has done this. Whom should we believe?

Date seller: She is the daughter of the Prophet; didn't the Prophet refuse any reward from us except for *muwaddah*, compassion, for his Ahl al-Bayt? She was so grieved...I can't imagine how the Prophet would feel if he were alive to see this happen.

Wahab: Indeed. We should be doing something for her...

Saʿd: Yes, but I don't know what!

Milk seller: Yes, honestly, we are confused between the two.

Ḥamīd: We know she's right. But can the caliph be completely wrong?

Wahab: I guess we'll have to talk about this again another time. It is very late, and we must go home. Maʿas-salām.

(Curtains Close)

End of Scene 4

Narrator: How sad was the state of these Muslims! They saw how much the family of their Prophet was being mistreated. They knew how much the Prophet loved Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa), and they knew the Ahl al-Bayt are lanterns of guidance. They also saw how the so-called caliphs after the Prophet lit the house of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) on fire, and how they stole Fadak from her. Yet, as they battled their inner selves, they were not able to decide which path to take. They were unable to recognize the truth, even though it was staring them in the face.

The story of Sayyidah Fāṭimah (ʿa) and what happened to her isn't just a historical story from over 1,000 years ago. We need to be able to look at her story and her words and see what she is telling us to do today. At that time, she asked the Muslims if they had forgotten about the Qurʾān. What about us? Are we following the Qurʾān the way we should? She wanted to awaken the Muslim ummah and urge them to choose the right path. Can we also awaken our souls through her words and choose the right path?

Today, as we await the ẓuhūr of Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj), we must be in the forefront of upholding the truth and battling falsehood. We must strenghten our faith and maʿrifah,

true understanding, of Islam in order to lay the foundation for the Imām's return. This is the only way we can ensure that when our Imām returns, we are not confused or indecisive like the characters in the play. We must be able to recognize ḥaqq, and more importantly, act upon that understanding. Fadak was a display of standing up for one's rights and the truth. It was a display of standing up for imāmah and having the courage to announce that Allah's will is the only command that counts.

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